

THE DARK DANCER

This novel begins with a homecoming. V. S. Krishnan, Cambridge-educated, Western-orientated, returns to India—to his home and to a marriage his family has arranged. The India he comes home to is uneasily awaiting the coming of independence, aware that it is on the brink of a great upheaval in its structure and in its tradition.

Krishnan, the product of two worlds, faces the life before him with uncertainty and dread, not knowing what his place in the approaching struggle will be, and unable to achieve a satisfactory relationship with his wife. As their marriage is caught up in the gathering political storm, matters are further complicated by the arrival of a beautiful English girl Krishnan used to know at Cambridge.

BOOKS BY
BALACHANDRA RAJAN

Literary Criticism

Paradise Lost and the Seventeenth Century Reader

T. S. Eliot: a Study by Several Hands

Modern American Poetry

Novel

The Dark Dancer

THE DARK DANCER

a novel by

BALACHANDRA RAJAN



HEINEMANN

LONDON MELBOURNE TORONTO

William Heinemann Ltd
LONDON MELBOURNE TORONTO
CAPE TOWN AUCKLAND
THE HAGUE

First published in Great Britain 1921

Printed in Great Britain
at The Windmill Press
Kingswood, Surrey

CONTENTS

1	HOMECOMING	Page 1
2	THE DEMONSTRATION	33
3	SEVENTY-TWO DAYS TO FREEDOM	52
4	SEASON OF THUNDERHEADS	116
5	THE REBELLION	133
6	DAY TRAIN TO DISASTER	181
7	SHANTHIPUR	209
8	THE DARK DANCER	263
9	SON OF KUNTI	279

CHAPTER ONE

HOMECOMING

I

IT WAS WHERE HE WAS BORN, but where he was born didn't matter. There was nothing in the cracked arid earth to suggest that he belonged to it, or in the river, shrunk away from the banks, that seemed almost to wrench its way through the landscape, startling the brown anger into green. The rail tracks ran forward like an act of will, straining across the flat baked plain, to the first muddle of houses; and then the road forked from it, driving relentlessly through the mantle of dust to an end that might have been reached from any beginning.

In the distance, hazing, and under the white blaze of midday almost venomous, the sheer rock of the temple rose with the houses clustered round it, carved out of the cliff, seeming to thrust it upward, proclaiming the pride and defiance of the earth. He looked at it and felt no emotion flow back. He was born in its shadow but he could have been born anywhere else, anywhere in that parched infinity where the roads narrowed and the gutters wormed among the congested houses, or wherever the scream filtered through the labouring rice fields and the thatch was pierced by the anger of the first cry.

He was coming back but not to an identity, a sense of being rooted, not even to an enmity like that of sun and earth, a struggle against circumstance, a creative confronting, which would open his mind to its depths of repossession. He was coming back to an indifferent sky, an anonymous teeming of houses, the road striking forever into a distance which not even the clenched thrust of the temple could make real.